Gay Activist Won't Face Church Group

By Alice Murray
Constitution Religion Writer

A leader of the gay activist movement in the Episcopal Church refused to attend a standing committee meeting of the Diocese of Atlanta Monday to be disciplined by the bishop.

Dr. Louie Crew, associate professor of English at Fort Valley State College and a founder of Integrity, the national Episcopal gay organization, said he would not appear before the committee until he had retained a lawyer.

The Rt. Rev. Bennett Sims had called Crew to the meeting Monday for "disciplinary action" because the homosexual leader had made public correspondence between himself and a local congregation in South Carolina.

Bishop Sims publicly rebuked Dr. Crew for the disclosure of support from the South Carolina church because the act served to "disrupt the peace nd good order" of the church.

Dr. Crew was told in March by the elected board of laity of St Luke Episcopal Church in Fort Valley, of which he a member, that the church members "would all be pleased if you would find some other place to worship that may be more in sympathy to your thinking and efforts toward gay people."

Following that letter, Crew received and made public a letter from the priest and vestry of his former congregation, St Paul's in Orangeburg, S.C., saying they were "inordinately distressed" at the action of St Luke's and inviting him to reestablish his membership.

Bishop Sims said in a letter to Crew "I rebuke you for your defiance of my explicit request not to make a public issue of a pastoral matter." He added that the disciplinary action is not directed to Crew's identity as a homosexual.

Bishop Sims said the matter concerning Crew is "under advisement by the standing committee and the bishop as to what action will be taken next."

Dr. Crew said he feels Bishop Sims "has no authority to restrict one freedom to report information of any kind particularly information that helps to discredit attempts to defame one's character."
Our church does not and should not require communicants to suspend our first amendment rights under the Constitution of the United States," he said.

"I too am concerned to protect the peace and good order of the church, but I see nothing peaceful or in good order when the church gags someone who is shouting alarm when asked to leave the church for having started an unpopular ministry," Dr. Crew said.

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